

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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**PRESS PREVIEW:

THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 1983
10 A.M. to 3 P.M.

EXHIBITION AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
CELEBRATES 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF RAPHAEL'S BIRTH

WASHINGTON, D.C. November 10, 1982. In celebration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Raphael (1483-1520), an exhibition entitled Raphael and America opens at the National Gallery of Art's East Building on January 9, 1983, and remains on view until May 8, 1983. This two-part exhibition examines Raphael's historical importance for American artists and collectors, and reevaluates his works in American collections.

The exhibition and an accompanying film have been supported by a generous grant from the National Italian American Foundation.

The National Gallery's Small Cowper Madonna, Saint George and the Dragon, Niccolini-Cowper or Large Cowper Madonna, Alba Madonna, and Portrait of Bindo Altoviti, the finest and most comprehensive collection of Raphael's paintings in America, are combined with four paintings and twelve drawings by Raphael from American and foreign lenders. Through a series of case studies of these paintings, Dr. David A. Brown, curator of early Italian painting, who

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conceived the exhibition and prepared the accompanying catalogue, analyzes Raphael's creative processes and offers new solutions to questions of authenticity and dating.

Raphael's Umbrian beginnings and relation to Perugino, his teacher, are examined in a series of early works including The Miracle of Saint Jerome, a small predella panel from the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. The Portrait of Emilia Pia from the Baltimore Museum of Art, heretofore a controversial attribution to Raphael, is newly dated to the period preceding his association with Perugino. The Agony in the Garden panel from The Metropolitan Museum of Art is reassessed with its preliminary study, or "cartoon," and an x-radiograph of the painting.

Raphael's residence in Florence from 1504 to 1508, where he came under the influence of Leonardo da Vinci and other Florentine masters, is presented through comparative study of several major works. Highlights of this section of the exhibition are the Small Cowper Madonna, recently cleaned to reveal Raphael's original spatial conception as well as the subtlety and brilliance of his color, and a preparatory drawing by Raphael, newly acquired by the National Gallery, for Saint George and the Dragon. Further, a new connection between Raphael's landscape in the painting of Saint George and a work by Flemish artist Hans Memling, also in the Gallery's collection, is proposed. Raphael's mature Florentine style is represented by the Large Cowper Madonna.

The major work in America from Raphael's Roman period

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(1508-1520) is the Alba Madonna exhibited with one preparatory and one related drawing by Raphael. The portrait of Bindo Altoviti, considered by some scholars to be the work of Giulio Romano, is firmly attributed to Raphael and dated to around 1512.

The first part of the exhibition considers Raphael in the context of American taste and collecting from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Raphael's impact in America was felt by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists who imitated the Italian master, seeking inspiration from his work. Examples include Benjamin West's drawing of The Water Bearer, after that figure in the Fire in the Borgo fresco in the Vatican; John Singleton Copley's The Ascension, composed in the manner of Raphael; and Washington Allston's Beatrice, in which the style of Raphael's religious paintings is adapted to portraiture.

Raphael's popularity in America led to an important production of copies of his paintings by professional artists. A version of the most famous of his works, Madonna of the Chair, is included in the exhibition together with other copies, one of which was purchased by Thomas Jefferson while Minister to France.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, major originals by Raphael had yet to enter American collections. Collectors such as Andrew W. Mellon, Samuel H. Kress, Peter A. B. and Joseph Widener, Isabella Stewart Gardner, J. P. Morgan, and Henry Walters vied to acquire whatever works were still available by the "Prince of Painters." Featured

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in this portion of the exhibition is the Madonna of the Candelabra from the Walters Art Gallery, the first Madonna by Raphael to enter an American collection.

The exhibition chronicles the efforts of these collectors by means of photographs of the collectors themselves and their paintings in situ, news clippings, albums, and other visual evidence about their acquisitions. A short film about American collectors and their Raphaels complements the installation of objects.

An international symposium in conjunction with the exhibition will be sponsored by the National Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts in January.

Editor's note: Three drawings by Raphael from the Uffizi will be on view for the opening week of the exhibition only.

END

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer), or Marla Price, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, (202) 842-6353.